

Rape Myth Acceptance and the Digital Age: How Technology Shapes Beliefs Among Juveniles

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Abstract

Rape Myth Acceptance (RMA) encompasses false beliefs that justify sexual violence, shift blame to victims, and excuse perpetrators. These myths perpetuate harmful stereotypes, undermining justice and societal understanding of sexual violence. In the digital age, technology plays a pivotal role in propagating and normalizing these beliefs, especially among juveniles, who are highly impressionable and dependent on technology for socialization and learning.

This paper explores the structure and belief systems underlying RMA, focusing on how technology enables its spread. Social media platforms, online forums, and digital media content act as vehicles for disseminating victim-blaming narratives and desensitizing youth to the severity of sexual violence. Additionally,

cyberbullying, online harassment, and exposure to harmful content contribute to the normalization of these myths among adolescents.

Juveniles' cognitive and emotional vulnerabilities, combined with peer influence and online interactions, further exacerbate the issue, leading to distorted perceptions of consent, victimhood, and justice. The paper also discusses strategies to mitigate the influence of technology, including digital literacy education, stricter content moderation, and AI-driven tools for countering harmful narratives.

By addressing the intersection of technology and RMA, this study underscores the need for a multidisciplinary approach to foster critical thinking, empathy, and a safer digital environment for juveniles, ultimately

challenging societal acceptance of sexual violence and its myths.

Introduction

Rape myths are false beliefs about sexual violence that shift blame to the victim and excuse the perpetrator, perpetuating societal attitudes that normalize sexual violence. These myths often stem from cultural, societal, and individual biases, influencing the perception of sexual violence and its victims. Technology, particularly the internet and social media, has become a significant enabler in the propagation and reinforcement of rape myths, especially among juveniles.

We can measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress that women have achieved" (DR. BR AMBEDKAR). by reciting his quote, let us step forward to understand the status of a woman. In regular, woman were playing a key role in everyone's life. They were treated as goddess on those ancient times. Meanwhile, they also treated differently than men by not providing the provisions equally. They have been ill-treated just for the sake of fulfilling the wishes of men. In the historical days, male-dominated society was being in a High peak, which led the woman to stay back behind on every circumstances. Most of the significant role in society are played by women right from their birth till her end. Though there are numerous laws, rules, regulations, programs, and awareness campaigns being conducted, still the woman's life is more complicated than a man's. To be honest, the status of a woman is improving gradually than in the ancient era. A woman is a companion to her busy and in her domestic life. She is not a slave to her husband. It is her duty to help her husband in many ways and be a suitable companion to him. She is a cheerful worker in fulfilling those duties. Valluvar's opinion about women is admirable.

His view is completely different from the view expressed in Manu smriti. That the difference between Valluvar's thinking about women and Manu's is like that between night and day—mountain and sink.

AN IMAGE OF WOMEN THROUGH TAMIL TEXT.

To be analysed, the image of women in traditional Tamil society did not follow a linear course; rather, it tends to have zigzag-turning views according to the periodic era. There is an ample amount of evidence that Tamil women excelled in Knowledge, energy and valour during the Sangam period. The total number of poets who sung Sangam literature were 477. Out of them, 300 are female poets. None of the civilizations, nations, language and eras had ever seen so many female poets. Avvaiyar served as an ambassador and councillor for Nedumaan Anji. In the purananuru (song - 279) composed by Okur Masathiyar, who was a warrior, women lost her father and her husband in the war. But still she called her young son, dressed him in white clothes, put him to work, and said, "Go to war." In the same Purananuru (song - 278) composed by Nacheliyaar, it says about another heroic mother who went to the battle field after her son lost his life in war by reciting a bold speech, "If my son had died of a back wound, I would have cut off my breasts from which he drank milk." It's a very important factor to highlight the image of the chaste wife in 2 | Page Tamil Tradition by discussing it with the notion of 'KARPU'. Customs and cultural norms change over time. But there have been certain values and beliefs that the Tamil society has persisted. For Tamilians, 'Karpu' is an important cultural significance, which was highly described in our Sangam literature text Tholkappiyam, having a separate entire section called Karpiyal. The term 'Karpu' not only connotes the chastity but also describes the qualities of a woman whom they

are supposed to do service (to their husband) by upholding their spirit of Loyalty and self-sacrifice

UNDERSTANDING RAPE

"Many excellences that look not on another's wife Is not virtue merely, it is full 'propriety' of life." (Couplet 148) Explanation: That noble manliness that looks not at the wife of another is the virtue and dignity of the great. Rape is one of the gravest kinds of sexual offence against women. Turning on to In our past, there was a practice of forced sexual intercourse, which was accepted as a way for a man to secure his wife. In an historical eye, the marriage institution clearly supported the attitudes towards men who have been carrying the responsibility to control and dominate women. The woman has been portrayed like a property to her father or male guardian, which was lately transferred to the husband's hand after she got married. This statement depicts that women no longer enjoyed any privileges; rather, they used to be treated as property / slaves, which also highlights those offences against Women, especially sexual harassment, is not even considered as a crime on those ancient times. But in alternative, stepping into this new trend era, many criminologists sowed the seeds on the aspect of rape and sexual harassment by underlining and placing a clear statement that the rape should need to be viewed as a crime against women. The root word of rape is got its birth from the Latin word rapere, which means to take by force. In the traditional aspects, it dictates that the rape directly engages an individual of another sex to perform nonconsensual sexual intercourse, neither they are married to nor cohabitating with (Franjic. S , 2021). According to Groth and Birnbaum (1979), all rapists encounter three elements : Anger, power and sexuality. Power rapist: For these rapists, rape is a way to

compensate for their own underlying sexual feelings, which is not in a balanced nature. Their intent is to showcase their power to a weaker person. They mostly engage with a verbal threat, intimidation with a weapon, etc. They used to have a kind of imagination within themselves of having sexual contact with another sex. They believe that even though the victim initially resists them, the victim will eventually enjoy the rape once the offender gets to overcome their victim power. 3 | Page Anger rapist : These rapists aim to humiliate and hustle the victim; they express their contempt through physical violence with a disgusting talk. For these rapists, sex is a weapon to degrade the victim, and also believe that the rape is the aggravated offence that they can commit against the victim in an extreme level. Anger rape is underlined when the power of force used against the victim during an assault goes beyond to simply overcoming the victim's penetration. This kind of offender targets the victim by beating, pushing, grabbing, or knocking the victim to the ground, tearing their clothes, and rapping them. Sadist rapist: This kind of rapist depends on having sexual excitement by causing an extreme pain that is wholly associated with his victim, which can actually contain 3 elements : extreme, prolonged suffering, and lack of self-control. To our convenience and in-depth look, the modern criminologists had divided the rape into two broad categories: stranger rape and acquaintance rape. Stranger rape depicts that the offender and the victim have never met before, while acquaintance rape depicts that both contacts will somehow know each other, which includes their family members and friends. Stranger rape is more extensively aggressive than acquaintance, in which the rapist can carry very harmful weapons or chemicals that would apparently threaten the victim and harm them. Further to be in the track of types of rape, here are some more dimensions in which the rape can be categorized:

Date rape: involves sexual harassment during a courting relationship. Gang rape: when a single victim is forced or attacked by a group of unknown people. Marital rape: Can be referred to as 'intimate partner sexual assault'—the rape that occurs between the married couple without the consent of one's spouse. Child-on-child sexual abuse: child who commits rape against another child who is usually stronger or adolescent than his victim. Statutory rape: involves when an adult male had a sexual relation with an underage minor girl. Serial rape: For a longer period of time, the rapist had committed rape against numerous victims. Payback rape: Can also be predicted as 'punishment rape or revenge rape'.

Rape: A Multi-Dimensional Analysis in India

"If woman might of chastity retain, what choicer treasure does the world contain?" needs (Couplet 54) Explanation: What is more excellent than a wife if she possesses the stability of chastity? According to India, one of the most serious crimes is rape, which needs to be taken into concern in a wide range of aspects. It was witnessed that for every 20 minutes, an Indian girl is being raped. Most of the reports made sure that the young adults are being targeted for rape victimization. As per the expert's opinion, among all over the nation, only 10 percent of rape incident are gotten to be 4 | Page reported, and the rate on offenders are still staying below the line of 25 percent. The 2013 NCRB Report has played an historical role in that year by revealing the 2012 report. It was witnessed that in the year 2012, the rape incidents were reported around 24,923. Out of those, 24,470 were committed by someone who was already known to them. To be in short,

98 percent of cases highlighted that their very own close or known persons were the reasons to be a victim. Delhi has placed the highest number of raw reports among cities on 2012, said the statistics that were published on The Hindu. In the same city, Jabalpur has spotted the highest number of rape cases on that year. Since 2012, the media has turned their attention to this concern, which was spread all over the nation as a wide-ranging problem, which also made the Indian government to take action regarding this. The Indian government decided to reform the Indian penal code and other laws regarding the offences that are relatable to women. Having a small sample survey done by our government, it was noted that more than 7200 minors in India are getting raped each year. Among those, it was witnessed that whoever had made the report to the police ended by treating them in an improper way. Most of the incidents have been in a blindfolded state because the victims are not ready to get victimized again by the government officials. These scenarios are not only on display in India but also around the world. The member of parliaments in India is having a heated conversation regarding the rape cases arising in society, having a strong reason by blaming the government, which failed to address and recheck the reporting status of victims in our nation. Only a few nations had taken a concerned step to look forward to unreported cases, which were still being in a dark side hell. It's been stating as a wide range of health problems, which mostly the college women's are getting worsening experience during their academic period. It was well noticed and addressed that the impact on rape not only made them emotionally disturbed but also showed a reverse impact on physical, mental, academic, and interpersonal relations.

Rape Myths and its Function

Rape myths not drawn attention in this modern era. It's began its journey from the 1970's by the writings of various feminists. The idea was derived from the Brownmiller's (1975) book, which illustrates that the rape myth is promoted by our cultural practices. Before jumping into the concept of rape myth, one must need to know the use of the 'myth'. By the simplest definition given by the 'Oxford dictionary', it means myth is 'widely spreading false belief or idea' by someone. Campbell, Sefl, Wasco and Ahrens (2004) discovered many types of myths and its purpose. To be shortened, we can categorize that into two models. There are sociological myths and psychological myths that depict certain social and moral codes to be followed. Sociological myths motive is to maintain social order by having a certain code which is needed to be followed by the culture. In this sense, they used to share a certain norm, like right or wrong, properties or improper ties, which depends on a particular social unit. Such, those maintain their specific order, which is needed to be practiced. According by an anthropological view, myths are produced to produce a prescribed view about the world. This view wouldn't have a breakdown; rather, it would lead into a continuity existence. All myths are constituted by some socializing force that conforms and promotes the values of social norms in a society. Rape myths have been now designed as a false assumption about rape, rape victims and rapists. It's been suggested that the beliefs and attitudes are turned over to victims instead of paying attention to perpetration. We can also be able to measure the acceptance of rape by sticking to the belief of the rape myth that we are surrounded by. Nowadays, among the young adults, the sexual myths and attitudes towards that myth are easily got

accepted by everyone. According to Lonsway and Fitzgerald, the acceptance of rape myth will differ between males and females. Myths provide us with an inevitable function by creating a sociological paradigm in which the members of society are to adhere to certain norms and behaviors in order to ensure the smooth process of social order. Proponents of rape myths have also described it as a functioning example of a first-world phenomenon, as proposed by Learner in 1980. There is a belief about the world phenomena. That is, the good things will happen for the good ones, while the evil things will happen for the people who think negatively in nature. To have a sight on this belief, people often search for evidence to suggest that victims instigated or deserved their misfortune. Burt (1980 , p.218) reasons the condemnation of rape victims as an extension of just world phenomenon by stating 'observers justify the misfortune of the victims by attracting responsibility or fault on to them'. This attribution protects the believer from accepting their own vulnerability in being susceptible to rape victimization. Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) also opined that rape myths were an extension of just-world phenomena. It explained why a woman became a victim of rape (by ascertaining certain stereotypical roles and characteristics specific to rape victims, such as promiscuity, or provocatively dressed, etc.). Secondly, rape myths justify the sexual aggression of a man by blaming the victim for the victimization, who was the major reason for occurring rape. This shift of responsibility made the victimization from the perpetrator to the victims, which protects 'the society from confronting the reality and the extent of sexual assault. In other words, rape myths also help to keep society in denial of the extent and magnitude of rape in society by addressing it as

a cultural problem rather than an individual occurrence. According to Burt (1991) rape myths help segregate rape into categories of fabricated rape, 'real rape' etc.

Technology's Role in Propagating Rape Myths

1. Social Media Platforms

- **Echo chambers and groupthink:** Algorithms promote content that aligns with users' beliefs, creating environments where rape myths can flourish unchallenged.
- **Viral Misinformation:** Social media allows rapid spread of victim-blaming narratives, often before accurate details of an incident emerge.

2. Pornography and Media

- **Harmful Portrayals:** Certain pornography normalizes violence against women, blurring lines between consent and coercion.
- **Media Content:** Popular shows, movies, and games sometimes perpetuate stereotypes that align with rape myths, especially when consumed by impressionable juveniles.

3. Cyberbullying and Online Harassment

- Victims of sexual violence, especially juveniles, are often targeted online, where narratives aligning with rape myths (e.g., "she was asking for it") are used to further shame and silence them.

4. Dark Web and Forums

- **Incels and Extremist Communities:** Online forums, especially those catering to "incel" (involuntary celibate) ideologies,

openly promote rape myths, framing sexual violence as justified.

Impact on Juveniles

Juveniles are particularly vulnerable due to their developmental stage and increased reliance on technology for social interaction and learning.

1. Cognitive and Emotional Development

- Adolescents are still forming their moral and ethical frameworks, making them more susceptible to adopting harmful beliefs from online narratives.

2. Peer Influence via Technology

- Social media exposes juveniles to peers who may unknowingly perpetuate rape myths through jokes, memes, or misinformation.

3. Online Grooming and Exploitation

- Technology is exploited by predators to groom juveniles, often using rape myths to manipulate or justify abusive behaviors.

4. Desensitization to Violence

- Constant exposure to harmful content desensitizes juveniles to the severity of sexual violence, reinforcing myths that trivialize it.

Mitigating the Influence of Technology

1. Digital Literacy Education

- Incorporating critical thinking and media literacy into school curriculums to teach juveniles how to identify and challenge rape myths.

2. Content Moderation

- Social media companies and content platforms must enforce

stricter guidelines to curb the spread of victim-blaming narratives.

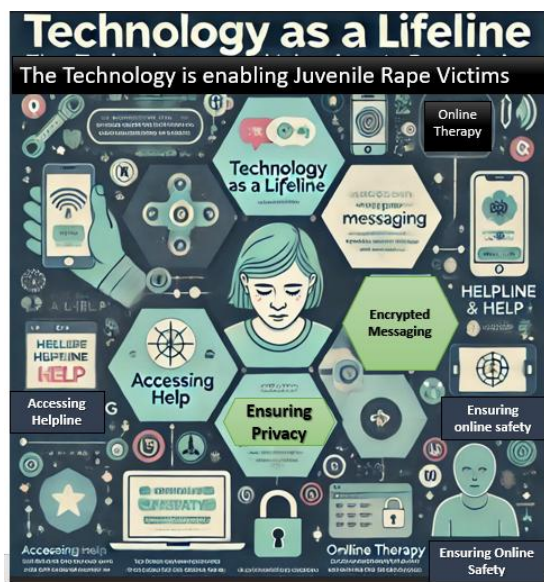
3. Parental and Community Involvement

- Encourage open conversations about consent, respect, and online safety within families and communities.

4. Technology-Driven Interventions

- Developing AI-powered tools to detect and counteract harmful narratives in real-time.
- Creating interactive apps or games that educate juveniles on the impact of rape myths and the importance of empathy.

"Technology as a Lifeline: Enabling Juvenile Rape Victims" visually communicates how technology can assist juvenile rape victims in seeking support, protection, and resources. Below is a detailed explanation of its components:



Key Elements in the Infographic:

1. Central Illustration (Juvenile Figure):

- The illustration of a juvenile in the center symbolizes the focus on victims of sexual violence, particularly juveniles, and their emotional and psychological needs.

2. Technology as a Lifeline:

- This headline emphasizes the dual nature of technology as both a potential risk and a critical enabler of help and safety for victims.

3. Accessing Help:

- **Helplines and Support Networks:** Icons for helplines and apps represent how victims can reach out to support organizations through their phones.
- **Encrypted Messaging:** Secure communication methods like encrypted apps (e.g., Signal or WhatsApp) are highlighted, ensuring victims can report or communicate confidentially without fear of interception.

4. Online Therapy:

- Depictions of therapy icons suggest that victims can access professional counseling and psychological support through online platforms, which are vital for mental health recovery.

5. Ensuring Privacy and Safety:

- Locks and shield icons signify privacy tools and safety measures, ensuring victims' data and communication remain protected.
- Privacy assurance is crucial for victims hesitant to report incidents due to fear of exposure or retaliation.

6. Educational Platforms:

- Interactive features and educational tools depicted in the infographic may include guides for victims on understanding their rights, recognizing abusive behaviors, and steps for seeking justice.

7. Role of Communities:

- The inclusion of community icons reflects the importance of collective action and peer support in fostering safe environments for victims.

8. Encouraging Reporting:

- The infographic subtly conveys that technology provides safe, anonymous channels for reporting abuse, which is especially critical for minors who may fear traditional reporting avenues.

Key Themes:

- **Empowerment Through Technology:** Demonstrates how technology can be a beacon of hope for juvenile victims by providing tools to seek help discreetly.

- **Security and Privacy:** Highlights the importance of safeguarding victims' identities and communications in a digital space.
- **Access to Resources:** Showcases the availability of technological solutions, such as helplines, online therapy, and educational platforms, for victims to heal and seek justice.
- **Action and Awareness:** Encourages both victims and the community to utilize these tools effectively to address sexual violence and support recovery.

This infographic serves as an educational and advocacy tool to promote awareness about how technology can be a powerful ally in supporting juvenile rape victims.

Conclusion

Rape myths are not just evolved in this modern era. It begins since our civilization got started. There is a need to underline that the rape is done by an individual or some group of members who are emotionally or mentally imbalanced in nature. Most of the researchers quoted that men can have more sexual feelings and aggressive behaviour than compared to females. Today, it has turned into a global phenomenon that every nation is taking seriously. In India the rape cases are still in their peak but not every incident gets reported to the police. There is a lack of sex education and awareness among public. It was stated that the westernization of cultural practices could also be the major reason for witnessing a higher rape incident. To be on a narrow path, this study has been conducted on four aspects: public belief about rape, rape perpetrator, and rape victim; the reasons for occurring rape; the reporting behavior; and finally, the attitude of the public towards victim

blaming. It was founded that majority of the people had a moderate level of belief on every concern. Even the research findings highlighted that most of the respondents who participated in this study stated that the victim couldn't be responsible for her own victimization.

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Authors: William O'Donohue, Erin A. Yeater, and Michelle Fanetti
Journal: Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 2003
Summary: This study focuses on the effectiveness of rape prevention programs targeting college males, considering factors like rape myth acceptance and victim empathy.
19. **"Rape Myth Acceptance in Contemporary Times: A Comparative Study of University Students in India and the United Kingdom"**
Authors: Rashmi Barn and Ráchael A. Powers
Journal: Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 2021
Summary: This comparative study analyzes the prevalence of rape myth acceptance among university students in India and the UK.

Government and Private Reports:

20. "Rape Myths: Myths vs Realities"

Presenter: Dr. Dominic Willmott

Platform: YouTube

Summary: This video provides an overview of common rape myths and their factual inaccuracies, aiming to debunk misconceptions surrounding sexual violence.

21. "Rape Myths | Pavan Amara | TEDxUCLWomen"

Presenter: Pavan Amara

Platform: YouTube

Summary: In this TEDx talk, Pavan Amara discusses common misconceptions about rape and emphasizes the importance of listening to survivors' stories.

22. "UC Connect: A Cross Examination of Rape Myths"

Presenter: Professor Elisabeth McDonald

Platform: YouTube

Summary: This public lecture delves into the prevalence of rape myths in legal settings and their impact on justice for survivors.

Open Educational Resources (OERs) and Other Internet Sources:

23. "Rape Myth"

Source: Wikipedia

Summary: This article provides an overview of rape myths, their societal implications, and measures like the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale.

24. "Rape Culture"

Source: Wikipedia

Summary: This entry discusses the concept of rape culture, its manifestations in society, and the relationship with rape myths.

25. **"Exploitation of Women in Mass
Media"**

Source: Wikipedia

Summary: This article explores how mass media contributes to the exploitation of women and the perpetuation of rape myths.